

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

May 15, 2020

TO: Christopher J. Roscetti, Technical Director
FROM: Matthew Duncan and Brandon Weathers, Resident Inspectors
SUBJECT: Oak Ridge Activity Report for Week Ending May 15, 2020

COVID-19: Last week, CNS completed the first stage of the COVID-19 recovery plan (see 5/8/20 report). CNS began the second stage of the plan on Monday morning, with most employees now working on site, while a significant number continue to telework when possible.

Nuclear Criticality Safety: This week, CNS conducted the second Nuclear Criticality Safety Committee meeting of 2020. CNS held the meeting virtually to accommodate the varied locations of personnel both at Y-12 and off-site. One of the main topics discussed at the meeting was an evaluation tool that can be used to indicate the health of the nuclear criticality safety program. The team that developed this tool established fourteen elements that contribute to the health of the nuclear criticality safety program. Examples of some program elements include personnel, program oversight, criticality safety evaluation implementation, change management, issues management, and continuous improvement. For each of these elements, the team created numerous sub-elements that were qualitatively graded by nuclear criticality safety program stakeholders from multiple organizations. A separate group evaluated the survey results and assigned qualitative ratings to the fourteen elements. From the initial exercise of using the evaluation tool, CNS concluded that the nuclear criticality safety program is effective with some acknowledged areas of weaknesses. CNS is taking the lessons learned from the initial results to improve the evaluation methods. For instance, CNS believes that further analysis of sub-elements that showed a divergence in survey responses would be valuable. CNS emphasized that the results of this evaluation tool should also be used to ensure that reviews are conducted for program elements that are perceived to be healthy. CNS plans to perform this evaluation annually for the Nuclear Criticality Safety Committee and Y-12 leadership.

Last year, CNS brought on an additional resource to assist the Nuclear Criticality Safety Committee. The overall organization and efficiency of the meetings has improved this year. The meeting materials were provided to attendees for review prior to the meeting and the agenda was focused on the highest priority items. These improvements address recommendations that committee members provided in 2019 to improve its effectiveness.

Startup Activity: NPO approved the third quarter fiscal year 2020 startup notification report, which included one new item for Y-12. CNS plans to install and operate a new laboratory hood and part marking system in Building 9215. CNS will perform a checklist contractor readiness assessment for this activity. CNS also provided an update for the restart of the ultrasonic chip cleaning process in Building 9212 (see 1/25/19 report). Prior to entering the reduced mission critical operations phase due to COVID-19, CNS readiness assurance personnel submitted a ready-to-proceed letter to CNS production management. NPO will perform a federal readiness assessment for this activity with the NPO manager as the startup authorization authority.